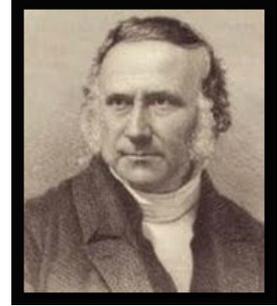


Determination



At the close of a religious service held in the evening, in a large public room, I requested all those who were not members of the church, but were disposed to attend to the matter of their salvation, to remain in the place, after the benediction was pronounced, and give me an opportunity to converse with them. I did this for the sake of convenience; as there were so many at that time, it was not easy for me to call upon all of them at their homes so often as they might perhaps desire to speak with me. And besides, it was quite likely, that some, just then, while the truth preached was upon their minds, and its impression had not worn off by their mingling with the world, might be induced to begin to seek God, by a request to take their stand at once. This, their instant duty, was urged upon them affectionately and earnestly. About sixty remained. Though it was impossible to have much conversation with so many, yet as there were some, whom I did not know, and whose residences I wished to learn for the purpose of visiting them, I passed from one to another, speaking to them such things as I found to be called for, by their state of mind.

While I was thus employed, and the assembly was peculiarly still and solemn, we were startled by the heavy and rapid tread of a person upon the steps leading up to the front door of the room. The rude footsteps ascended the stairs, sounded along the wooden platform, the door burst open as if by violence, a young man rushed in with an excited, wild look, stamped up the aisle hastily, and flung himself into a vacant seat. He

breathed heavily; and with his head erect, he stared wildly around, with such a look of iron determination, as I never saw. Till that moment, I had supposed, that it was some evil-minded person, who had come in, to disturb us. The heavy tread upon the stairs, and stamp along the floor, so rude and hasty, contrasted strangely with the quiet and solemnity of the place and the occasion. But as the young man sat still, and only looked wildly, and breathed strongly, those who had been startled at his entrance became composed; and I began to think, that he might have come there with no wicked or unfriendly intention. I kept my eye on him, as he sat with his head erect, but said nothing to him, till I had finished what I had to say to all the rest. Still doubtful of his intentions, I went to him, offered him my hand, (which he seized with the grasp of a madman,) and seating myself by his side, inquired whether he wished to see me. Said he:—

“I have had a dreadful struggle. I have known, this month, that I ought to attend to my salvation. I went home from this place, to-night, and when I got there, I could not go in. I turned about and came back here, and when I got to the door, I could not come in here. I turned about to go home, but it was hard work. I got over the bridge; but when I was going up the hill to the gate, my knees failed me, my heart gave way, I felt as if I was fighting with God! I turned about and came back here to the door, but I could not get in to save my life: I was ashamed to be seen here. I thought every body would laugh at me, if it should be known, and I could not bear that: and I was afraid I should not hold out if I began, and then I should be ashamed of myself to go back to the world. So I gave it up and went off determined to think no more about it. But I could not help thinking. I stopped on the bridge and stood there a long time, looking first one way and then the other, and I could not stir a step either way. A man came along and passed me as I stood there in the dark, and I went on after him up the hill, till I got my hand upon the gate. But I could not open it: I thought I was opening the door of hell to go in! I determined I would come back, or die in the attempt. But I was afraid to

trust my resolution; so I ran with all my might and stopped for nothing, till I got my seat here.—I am a dreadful sinner! I have opposed God. If I do not gain salvation now, it will be too late for me! I have struggled against the Holy Spirit for a month! My heart has been too stout for me; but I have made out to get here.”

I conversed with him for a few moments, and dismissing the assembly, accompanied him to his own door, and bade him good night. In my conversation with him, I aimed to convince him of the mercy of God to sinners, through Jesus Christ,—of the necessity of faith in Christ, and repentance for sin,—of the free offer of salvation to be accepted at once,—of the hardness, wickedness, and obstinacy of his heart, which was every instant resisting truth and the Holy Spirit.

The next morning, early, my door-bell rang violently. I opened the door, and there he stood, pale, and trembling. “I can’t live so!” said he, with a look of agony.—“What shall I do?”

“Mr. R—,” said I, “you are very much afraid of going to hell, but”—

“Hell?” said he;—“I never thought of it! It is this heart,” (said he, smiting upon his breast,)—“my dreadful heart! It fights against God! That is what puts me in this awful agony!”—Said I:—

“Your only hope must be in the power of the Divine Spirit to subdue your rebellion.”

“I find it so, sir. I have tried all night, and I am as much at war with God as ever! If he does not save me I am gone! Pray for me.”

This young man became at peace very soon. Two days afterwards I found him calm. He afterwards became a member of the church; and for the ten years that I knew him, he was one of the most devoted and

constant Christians I have ever known. Remembering the struggle of that night, when he ran to get to our meeting, lest his heart should get the victory over him; he was accustomed to insist upon ‘decision, decision, decision,’ to every anxious sinner whom he addressed. Said he, “If you expect God to help you, you must be perfectly decided.”

Decision is a vastly important matter with a convicted sinner. The Bible treats it as such. “Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.” A sinner must choose, or he must be lost. Nobody else can choose for him. Nothing can excuse him from doing this duty, at once. If he will not do it, he may expect the divine Spirit to depart from him, and leave him to his own way.